

Major housebuilders ditch plastic as they replace material with mushrooms, seaweed and bamboo

The building trade produces 50,000 tonnes of plastic waste each year, 40 per cent of which is sent to landfill

By Helena Horton
15 November 2020 • 7:00pm



New builds will have insulation made of mushrooms | CREDIT: Changing Streams

Major housebuilders are set to ditch plastic as they replace the wasteful material with mushrooms, bamboo and seaweed.

The construction sector is the second largest producer of [plastic waste in the UK](#), after packaging. It creates 50,000 tonnes of plastic every year, 40 per cent of which goes to landfill.

Now, a new industry group, Changing Streams, has been set up, so property chiefs can work with scientists to enable them to build more [sustainable housing](#).

One of the UK's largest housing providers, Your Housing Group, which owns over 28,000 homes across the North West, Yorkshire and the Midlands, has signed up and aims to swap plastic materials for biodegradable alternatives.

Simple swap-outs include using Mycelium (Mushroom) based cavity insulation, as well as hemp. These natural materials perform the same function as plastic-based insulation but are natural and biodegradable.

The company will also use plastic-free paint, as well as specially-formulated paint that absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Other options being considered include bamboo used for scaffolding and some house structures, as well as seaweed which can be used in place of wood.

Housebuilders have been invited to work with the new non-profit group, founded by construction entrepreneur Neal Maxwell, alongside Dr Gareth Abrahams and Professor Jonathan Sharples from the University of Liverpool.

Dr Abrahams, co-founder and architect from the University of Liverpool's School of Environmental Science, added: "The plastic epidemic is continuing at an alarming pace and it's vital we raise awareness of the issues and the impact it is having on the global ecosystem.

"As part of the partnership, Your Housing Group will be able to collaborate with extensive knowledge platforms within the University, as well as the development of a bespoke research and action plan to reduce plastic usage.

"We have exciting research and development plans in the pipeline, from the creation of an accreditation system based on commitments and actions used to remove plastic from design and construction processes, to research strategies used to explore and develop sustainable plastic free-and plastic reduced materials. We need more progressive businesses like Your Housing Group to join us and help engage, support and fund the research and innovation to ensure we can accomplish real change."

Almost a quarter of all plastic made in the UK is created by the construction industry, and the group hopes to rapidly reduce this by recruiting housebuilders.

Brian Cronin, chief executive of Your Housing Group, said: "Your Housing Group is committed to working effectively and efficiently to build quality houses and play our part in solving the national housing crisis, but we want to do so in a sustainable way.

"The work that Changing Streams does is inspiring and firmly aligns with our core values of passion, pride, creativity, and accountability. With the support of Changing Streams Your Housing Group will take steps to significantly reduce our use of plastic so that we can help drive positive change within our sector and build houses that not only create communities but help protect the future."

Mr Maxwell, who has worked in construction for 30 years, founded the group after travelling to Arctic and seeing that plastic had even made an impact in remote areas.

He said: "We used to use asbestos throughout our industry before we knew the damage it was doing to our lungs. We know the damage plastic is doing to our planet and other species. Isn't now the time to do something about the problem?"

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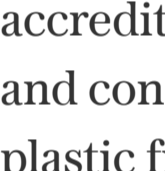


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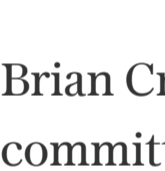
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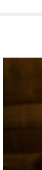


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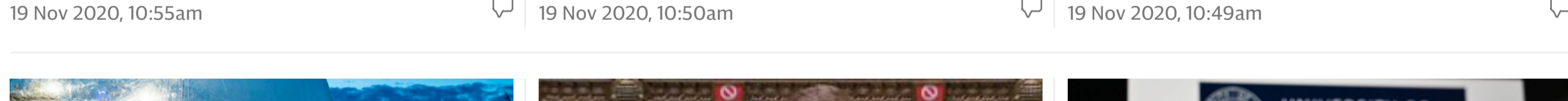
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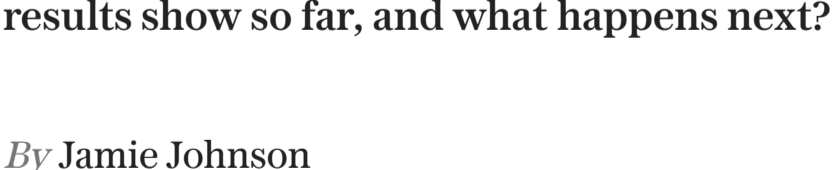
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